

Karwan Bazar underpass being renovated

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has started renovation work of the Karwan Bazar underpass from this month.

Since its opening in 1997, no maintenance work was ever done on this much-used underpass in one of the city's busiest areas and it has remained in a run-down condition.

DCC sources informed that the renovation is going on under the beautification project of the capital at a cost of around fifty lakh Taka.

"We will replace the shades of the terminals on both sides of the underpass with transparent sheets and the problems inside will also be fixed," said Abul Hasnat, executive engineer of DCC.

The DCC had formed a committee to repair and develop the underpass about two years ago but nothing reportedly came out of it.

The Karwan Bazar underpass is used by a significant number of people everyday but over the years, it has become extremely unhygienic and insecure due to lack of maintenance.

Water-logging inside it during rain often made the underpass inoperative. Besides, surface water has also dripped inside continuously because of technical faults of the structure.

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the water from dripping inside the underpass," said an official of Zone-6 of DCC. The engineers also informed that the air circulating machine of the underpass that was taken away by the DCC, will be replaced again.

"I admit that there were many technical problems in this underpass. But we will sort out all the faults this time," said an official of DCC.

There are three underpasses in the city and all of them have become insecure for pedestrians especially for women as many have become victims of mugging and snatching.

Four policemen and eight security guards had been employed to ensure security at the Karwan

Bazar underpass in three shifts but the police were withdrawn long ago and the number of guards also shrunk to six as time went by.

"Increase of security is not part of the renovation project but we will recommend it to the concerned authorities," said a DCC official.

The renovation work is expected to be completed by November this year.

Karwan Bazar underpass was constructed with Tk 1.12 crore and was inaugurated in 1997. The two other underpasses in Gulistan and Gabtali were opened in that same year and have also suffered from the same kind of neglect with no maintenance work done in the last seven years.



BETTER LATE THAN NEVER: The DCC has started renovating the Karwan Bazar underpass recently.

BOOK IMPORTERS ALLEGE

VAT pushes up piracy

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Imposition of Value Added Tax (VAT) on books has led to the growth of pirated books as the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is not allowing importers to release books from the customs without paying the tax.

"The VAT commissioners are issuing notices to all booksellers to pay VAT of the last three years. Without paying the VAT, the NBR does not allow us to take delivery of imported books at the border checkpoints. We

are unable to import books now and this is destroying the business as pirated books are flooding the market," said Sadat Hossain, a book importer and owner of Book View in New Market.

First Secretary of VAT Abdul Kafi said the government imposed 1.5 percent VAT on retail book sales in FY01. As booksellers did not pay VAT, the NBR took the initiative to collect it from the importers.

For locally published books, the NBR has been issuing notices to the individual book-

sellers. But book importers think the NBR policy goes against the very concept of VAT.

"VAT should be calculated and paid after sales and not before that. But the NBR has been collecting it in advance," said another bookseller of Bangla Bazar.

"There was no circular from the government and all of a sudden the NBR asked us to pay VAT for three years," said Mofizul Islam, secretary of Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association (BBPSA).

There are about 6,000 publishers and booksellers in the country, about 1,000 of them doing business in Dhaka. Bangla Bazar, Nilkhet, Aziz Market and New Market are the major book markets.

According to the BBPSA, every year books worth over Tk 5 crore are imported, 99 percent of them from India.

"A major percentage of imported books are reprinted in India, which we can import at a cheaper price than the countries where these are originally published," said Sadat Hossain.

BBPSA sources said books worth Tk 250 crore are published every year of which books worth Tk 150 crore fall in the category of textbooks. Creative books account for about

Tk 50 crore and religious books Tk 10 crore of the pie.

Sellers say the book market is not very vibrant right now and the imposition of VAT would increase prices to affect students and the readers. They say the fiscal measure goes against the government's declaration of the year 2004 as the "Children Literature Year," 2003 as "Library Year" and 2002 as "National Book Year".

The book publishers and sellers observed a strike on August 22 protesting the imposition of VAT. They plan more programmes unless the tax is withdrawn.



PHOTO STAR

Buffets usher in a new trend

MANISHA GANGOPADHYAY

A buffet lunch or dinner is no longer a luxury enjoyed by the elite of the city only. Over the last decade or so, it has become a trendy and affordable concept of dining for the middle-class too.

Sonargaon Hotel first brought the commercial buffet to the city in the early eighties. Many years' later, posh restaurants of Gulshan, Banani and Uttara decided to pick up the cue as Dhaka's eateries entered a revolutionary phase, which is still continuing.

The popularity of buffet meals stem from the fact that customers get to choose and taste from a wide range of foreign and local cuisines, which if ordered separately, would have been quite expensive. There is no waiting at the table for your food to arrive, a great convenience to people in a hurry. One just picks up a plate and starts filling it up.

Most buffet meals offered by restaurants in Dhaka come at prices between Tk 200 to 350 for a single person.

The craze has caught on so rapidly that even fast food joints have started opening separate outlets that offer buffet meals. Piano, for instance, has been in operation for only a year and already its management has opened another restaurant next to it called Spice, where buffet is the main attraction.

The buffet style is most popular during lunch hours when office goers stop in for a quick meal. "We started the buffet so that lunch-hour customers do not have to look at a menu and then wait 20-25 minutes for the meal to be prepared. They can just enter and take the food," said the manager of Royal Orchid restaurant Sayed Ataur Rahman Shohag.

"Now we also see middle-class people coming in once in a while. In the past it was only the wealthy who patronised," added Shohag.

According to Aditya Dutta, corporate manager of operations, Samarkand was the pioneer in bringing buffet dining to the restaurant scene

when they opened in April, 2000. Anticipating the popularity of the buffet, the owners of Lemon Grass restaurant, inaugurated in 1992, created Samarkand, a strictly buffet restaurant with twice the seating capacity of its Thai predecessor.

Even Lemon Grass introduced the buffet about four months ago and at present, 70 percent of its customers reportedly choose buffet over ordered meals.

The appeal of the buffet has spread to other restaurants across the city, though Gulshan and Banani-based ones still dominate. Some of the leading buffet restaurants take pride in their diverse menu. Topkapi offers Turkish buffet, Sajna and Khazana specialise in Indian delicacies, while Spice is known for its Chinese and Arabian food.

Mondira in Banani distinguishes itself with a

Bangladeshi buffet at a modest price of Tk 200. "You can not beat this price for such quality food," exclaimed Munia Chowdhury, a university student helping herself to a plate of biriyani, mutton curry and mango pickle.

Most restaurants change their buffet menu everyday. "There are some 147 dishes available in our regular menu and all of them are offered in turn at the buffet. Each day, the customers can taste over 20-22 items at the buffet," says Shohag of Royal Orchid.

Buffets bring in more business. "Chances are that some of those who are coming for lunch will return with friends and family later in the week for a dinner. If even 10 percent of the people at lunch come back for dinner, it makes a significant positive impact on our commercial success," said a manager of a restaurant in Banani.



PHOTO STAR

healthouting, taxicab & train timing

HEALTH

Hospitals

Heart
National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD),
- 9130800, 9122560-59

Burn
Dhaka Medical College Hospital
Burn Unit-8626812-6

Cancer
National Cancer Institute-8014914,
8826561-65
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University-8612550-4,
861455-9

Diabetes
Diabetic Research Hospital
(BIRDEM)- 9661551-5,
8616641-50

Mother & Child Care
Shishu Hospital-9119119,
8116061-62
Azimpur Mother & Child Health
Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

Eye

Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794,
9119315
National Eye Hospital- 8117202,
8114807

Dental
Dental College -9002035

Orthopaedics
National Orthopaedics (Pangu)
Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

General
Dhaka Medical College Hospital-
8626812-6
Rushmono General Hospital-
8317819

Holy Family Hospital-
8311731-25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University Hospital-
8612550-4, 8614545-9
Bangladesh Medical College &
Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,
Shamarita Hospital- 9131901
Suhrawardy Hospital - 9130800,

9122560-69

Salimullah Medical Collage
Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
Cholera Research Hospital
(ICDDR)- 8611751-60
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,
7310061, 7319022
Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital-
8626812-9

Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-
8614040

Ambulances For Dead Body

Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail)
9336611, Gandaria 7319808,
7318166,
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday
Polwell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursdays
Ahsan Manzil--Thursdays.
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065
Salida 9344477, 0171620881
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191
Cab One 7113282-3
Nihon 8624741-2
Orion 9347277
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611
Capital 9352847

Union

8130485

Kool 0171826731

Black Cab

Cab Ex 9358401

Cabline 8321162

JBS Cab 019364575

Sajan 018126036

Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

Cab One 7113282-3

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm

Mahanagar Prabhati

Leaves Dhaka at 7-30 am

Mahanagar Godhuli

Leaves Dhaka at 3-15 pm

Turna

Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm

Parabat Express

Leaves Dhaka at 6-40 am

Joyantika Express

Leaves Dhaka at 12-45 pm

Upaban Express

Leaves Dhaka at 9-45 pm

Tista Express

Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 am

Ekata Express

Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm

Upakul Express

Leaves Dhaka at 8-00 pm

AgniBeena Express

Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm

LIBRARY & INFO

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers
Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280,
9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
Information Resource Center, The
American Center - 8813440-4,
9886395-9
British Council- 8618867-8,
8618905-7
Community Development Library-
8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka-
9126525-6
Indian Information Centre &
Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre-
9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125,
8112954, 8123412
Press Institute of Bangladesh
(PIB) 9330081-4